

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive

Gardner-Webb Publications

5-28-2020

GWU Alumna Encourages Teachers and Students During COVID-19 Pandemic

Office of University Communications

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive>

GWU Alumna Encourages Teachers and Students During COVID-19 Pandemic

webpublish.gardner-webb.edu/newscenter/ray-provides-support-during-covid-19/

Office of University
Communications

May 28, 2020

Dr. Brittany Ray Recognized Staff with Virtual Appreciation Week

The Gardner-Webb University School of Education has alumni located across the state, serving at all levels, from superintendents to classroom teachers. When public schools closed in North Carolina on March 14, 2020, educators were asked to switch to distance education—a task most had never attempted before. Amid this current crisis, these educators have adjusted.

Administrators, like Dr. Brittany M. Ray, have offered support to their staffs and the children during this unprecedented time. Ray earned her Master of Arts in Executive Leadership from GWU in 2013 and her doctorate in educational leadership in 2018. She is an assistant principal for a middle school in Fayetteville, N.C., that has approximately 1,100 students.



Q: Why did you want to teach middle school?

Ray: I began teaching middle school students in 2010. I love middle school, because I believe that is the most influential level. Kids start to discover what kind of person they want to be. They are easily influenced, and I wanted to influence them in a positive way. I transitioned into an administrator role, because I wanted to have a larger part in the decision-making process to evoke change.

Q: What was the most significant challenge of providing distance education?

Ray: My greatest challenge has been that I am unable to gauge the true feelings of my students and staff. I believe that body language can tell you a lot about an individual; and unfortunately due to COVID-19, I have been looking at computer screens and avatars. To encourage my students and staff, I gave the teachers a virtual teacher appreciation week. I

partnered with students and families to get video clips and pictures of students expressing their appreciation. In addition, I made sure that I included things that would help with their mental and physical health, such as virtual mindfulness yoga practices and Zumba sessions online.

Q: Can you give an example of innovative strategies that worked well during this time?

Ray: Inquiry-Based Learning techniques allowed students to virtually collaborate and do projects. For example, one of my teachers gave students the task of finding the “perfect mask,” and its components. Students were allowed to create a mask out of any material, but they had to explain their reasoning.

Q: What words of encouragement do you have for other educators?

Ray: Remember your why.

Q: What changes would you like to see in the field of education post-COVID-19?

Ray: I think that people need to stay open minded and not be opposed to unconventional ways of instruction. Self-care is important. We need to continue to take care of ourselves physically, spiritually and emotionally. Moving forward, I think that school systems should include more social-emotional learning resources and personnel for both students and teachers.

[Learn more about the School of Education.](#)